

'CREATED CO-CREATOR' AS A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION FOR A SUSTAINABLE CORPORATE ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

(Paper in Progress)

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Abstract: An ethically justified, philosophically valid and theologically qualified anthropology is essential in dealing with the current environmental crisis. We argue in this paper that the concept 'created co-creator' (CCC) developed by P. Hefner, can function as a healthy paradigm in business firms since it includes both secular (Corporate Social Responsibility- CSR) and religious (Catholic Social Thought- CST) dimensions. Furthermore, this concept opens up many possibilities for dialogue between CST and CSR. CCC advocates those business choices and policies that respect the natural environment and positively contribute to environmental health. CCC acts as a good and active steward by appreciating and respecting the goodness of creation and by contributing profusely for the protection and promotion of a sustainable environment. CCC aims to accomplish the common good while doing good business and making ethically justifiable profits.

I. Introduction

Business enterprises and companies come under strict scrutiny in the critical gaze of the society, especially in this age of globalisation, information revolution, technological advancement and the rat race of the market economy to make profit. The ability of business enterprises to contribute to the overall development of the society in general and their philanthropic dimension in particular are closely investigated in our contemporary society, and these are relevant in the context of our discussion about what makes a company a 'good company'. Accountability for all their undertakings is something that the society expects of the business firms and labelling a company as good would then depend on whether they have acted responsibly in the given situations. Society has a very sceptical view of business enterprises and suspects their credibility, especially after the fall of giant firms like Enron and the circumstances that have led to this.¹

Development and progress appear to be the backbone of our societies, especially when people want to achieve a better standard of life and enjoy the fruits of the technological and scientific innovations. Though development and progress are applauded, there is a growing concern about the environmental crisis, which is said to be a product of the complex situation in general and the negligence on the part of the human beings in

¹ "The good company. Is corporate philanthropy worthwhile?," *The Economist* 378, no. 8466 (February 25th, 2006), 10. It is argued here that corporate philanthropy is being thoroughly scrutinised, especially since the fall of Enron. This is due to the fact that many people believed that the donations from Enron to the good causes of the board members would have prevented them to hold the top executives of the company to account. Companies are called upon to justify their philanthropic ventures based on strategic grounds. See also the whole special booklet in this issue named: 'The business of giving. A survey of wealth and philanthropy'.

particular.² Business firms have a major role to play in societal development and in this process we need to take into account the impact of their activities on the natural environment. Humanisation of the economy and balanced development, with specific emphasis on the interpersonal dimension, capabilities and ethical behaviour are real needs now more than ever before.³ The success of a business firm cannot be evaluated merely on the financial gains that it is able to make, but it should also be based on its ability to contribute towards the overall development of individuals and societies. Furthermore, it should take into account the impacts that it has on the natural environment and strive to contribute positively to its protection and betterment.

II. Becoming eco-conscious

The current state of affairs with regard to the environment calls us to reflect deeply on the ecological challenges that we face. There have been several attempts in the past to acknowledge the current ecological crisis and to formulate a plan of action that would enable us to care for the environment in a better manner, while recognising that economic development is significant as well. The Brundtland Report (1987), the Rio Declaration (1992) and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002) have made praiseworthy efforts and contributions to balance economic growth with environmental health and sustainability.⁴ Though anthropocentric in their approach (see for example article 1 of the Rio Declaration), these different commissions have stressed the need to make a good review of the current policies and practices. They were convinced of the fact that economy should be linked to ecology and that time was ripe for the humankind to accept the responsibility for the causes of the environmental damage as well as its

² Robin Attfield, *Environmental Ethics: An Overview of the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), 17-21; William P. Cunningham, Mary Ann Cunningham, and Barbara Woodworth Saigo, *Environmental Science. A Global Concern*, 7th ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2003), 370; Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation. The Gifford Lectures, 1984-1985* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1985), 21; Jürgen Moltmann, "The Destruction and Healing of the Earth: Ecology and Theology," in *God and Globalization. The Spirit of the Modern Authorities*, ed. Max L. Stackhouse and Don S. Browning (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2001), 169.

³ Amartya Sen, "Does Business Ethics Make Economic Sense?," in *The Ethics of Business in a Global Economy*, ed. Paul M. Minus (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1993), 61; Amartya Sen, *Development As Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 269; Stefano Zamagni, "Humanising the Economy: on the Relationship between Catholic Social Thinking and Economic Discourse," in *Catholic Social Thought. Twilight or Renaissance?*, ed. J.S. Boswell, F.P. McHugh, and J. Verstraeten (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2000), 167.

⁴ The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), *Our Common Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 8-9. The World Council of Churches has also committed itself to the cause of achieving sustainability. It emphasises on the need to have a different value system. The growth of economic globalization, consumerism and violence seem to be the values that many people have accepted. To inculcate care and concern for the environment and for achieving sustainability, a different value system is necessary. The WCC presents gratitude, humility, sufficiency, justice, peace, love, faith and hope as those values that should motivate people to move towards the achievement of sustainability. For more details see: David G. Hallman, *Spiritual Values For Earth Community* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2000), especially Chapter 3, Spiritual Values For Justice and Sustainability, 33-124. See also the Rio Declaration and WSSD: United Nations Environment Programme. Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, [http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?ArticleID=1163&DocumentID=78&l=en\(3-14](http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?ArticleID=1163&DocumentID=78&l=en(3-14) June, 1992, accessed September 1st, 2006); Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development, [http://www.un.org/events/wssd/\(26th August - 4th September, 2002, accessed August 12th, 2006\).](http://www.un.org/events/wssd/(26th August - 4th September, 2002, accessed August 12th, 2006).)

consequences. They have argued that development should aim at the well-being not only of the present generations, but of the future generations as well. In spite of their highly anthropocentric overtones, they also make mention of the fact that nature should be preserved and that we have a moral obligation towards nature and other living beings. The UN Global Compact (2004) as a regulatory instrument emphasizes in its core principles (7-9)⁵ that companies should promote greater environmental responsibility and adopt environmentally friendly technologies. The reassertion of an '*ethics of responsibility*' based on an ethically qualified and environmentally friendly anthropology is by all means vital now, since our decisions are greatly influenced by our understanding of the role of the human person. This must take into account the goodness of creation and the creative capabilities of the human persons in their efforts to achieve the common good, if we are to achieve sustainable development and true progress in the present context.⁶

III. Dialogue between CST and CSR as a necessity

In our discussion about corporate environmental responsibility CST and CSR are of great significance. In my opinion, when put together, they have a greater capacity to contribute towards this end. Catholic Social Thought (CST) as a tradition has contributed vehemently to the bridging of gaps in the society by emphasising on the first order principles of human dignity and common good and the second order principles of the subjective dimension of work, subsidiarity and social nature of property. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has done this by engaging in the fields of business ethics and business enterprise by laying accent on the stakeholder theory, corporate citizenship and sustainability.⁷ There exists a need to enter into a deeper dialogue between CST and CSR

⁵ United Nations Global Compact, <http://www.unglobalcompact.org/>(United Nations, 2004, accessed September 8th, 2006). See especially the three principles regarding the environment. 1) Business should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges; 2) undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility; and 3) encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.

⁶ Helen Alford, Barbara Sena, and Yuliya Shcherbinina, "Philosophical Underpinnings and Basic Concepts for a Dialogue between CST and CSR on the "Good Company" Working Draft," (2006); Geoffrey P. Hammond, "People, planet and prosperity': The determinants of humanity's environmental footprint," *Natural Resources Forum* 30 (2006), 28; Hans Jonas, *Das Prinzip Verantwortung. Versuch einer Ethik für die technologische Zivilisation* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1979), 198; Francis Kadaplackal, "From 'Imago Dei' to 'Created Co-Creator'. Going Beyond Strong Anthropocentrism Through An Ethical and A Theological Reinterpretation of The Role and Task of Human Beings in Creation" (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 2005), 115; Marjorie Keenan, *Pontifical Council For Justice And Peace. From Stockholm to Johannesburg. An Historical Overview of the Concern of the Holy See for the Environment 1972-2002* (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2002), 20; Oliver F. Williams, "The UN Global Compact: The Challenge and the Promise," *Business Ethics Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (2004), 755.

⁷ M. Shawn Copeland, "Reconsidering the Idea of the Common Good," in *Catholic Social Thought and the New World Order: Building on One Hundred Years*, ed. Oliver F. Williams and John W. Houck (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 322; Dean Maines and Michael Naughton, "Middle Level Thinking. The Importance of Connecting and Mediating Catholic Social Thought, Corporate Social Responsibility, and Business Practice. Working Draft," (2006); Peter H. Sedgwick, *The Market Economy and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 258; Johan Verstraeten, "Re-thinking Catholic Social Thought as Tradition," in *Catholic Social Thought. Twilight or Renaissance?*, ed. J.S. Boswell, F.P. McHugh, and J. Verstraeten (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2000), 64.

so that we can work towards the protection of the environment by combining the CST-CSR principles. Even though the stakeholder theory has its advantages, it has a limited focus especially with regard to the achievement of the common good⁸ and environmental sustainability.

I am of the opinion that a sound anthropology is necessary to enable a better dialogue between CST and CSR. To put an end to the eco-suffering, we need to go beyond egocentrism and selfishness in our dealings with nature. In the implementation of business policies and practices we must strive towards the achievement of greater environmental health and integral human development through the accomplishment of the common good. To this end, we certainly need to have a philosophically valid, theologically qualified and ethically justified concept of the human person that reaffirms human dignity, active participation, and the realisation of the common good and supports genuine progress and healthy development.

Christianity's 'theology of creation' has been constantly accused of its alleged negligence towards the natural environment based upon anthropocentric interpretations, attitudes and behaviour.⁹ Scholars like Hall, Coste and Wirzba find this an exaggeration, though they admit that we need to look closely into our own tradition and undergo '*metanoia*' and examine if we have been good stewards. Hall says that "deliberate hostility toward the creation is not the charge. But it is at least possible that the custodians of our religious tradition have used it, and permitted it to be used, to create a spiritual-intellectual atmosphere in which certain attitudes and practices of a questionable and dangerous character could emerge".¹⁰ A critical and constructive analysis of Christian theological anthropology and a positive appreciation of the goodness of creation can help us to reinterpret the proper role of the human persons in their relationship with God, other human persons and the world.¹¹

In this context, I would like to introduce the theo-anthropological category '*Created co-creator*', developed by P. Hefner (1988, 1993, 1997, 2005) and which has now become an important concept in the theological circles, in the discussions about the role of the

⁸ Helen J. Alford and Michael J. Naughton, *Managing As If Faith Mattered. Christian Social Principles in the Modern Organisation* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 41; Eric W. Orts and Alan Strudler, "The Ethical and Environmental Limits of Stakeholder Theory," *Business Ethics Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (2002), 215.

⁹ Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Ecological Theology: Roots in Tradition, Liturgical and Ethical Practice for Today," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 42, no. 3 (Fall 2003), 226; Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," *Science* 155 (March 10th, 1967), 1203-1207.

¹⁰ Douglas John Hall, *Imaging God. Dominion as Stewardship* (New York: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 25. See also, René Coste, *Dieu et L'écologie. Environnement, théologie, spiritualité* (Paris: Les Editions De L'atelier, 1994), 42-47; Norman Wirzba, *The Paradise of God. Renewing Religion in an Ecological Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 126.

¹¹ Richard L. Fern, *Nature, God and Humanity. Envisioning an Ethics of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 167; Marjorie Keenan, *Pontifical Council For Justice And Peace. Care For Creation. Human Activity And The Environment* (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2000), 27; Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, *In the Beginning... A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall*, trans. Boniface Ramsey (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 45; David Siegenthaler, "Ecology Needs Theology," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 42, no. 3 (Fall 2003), 242.

human person in the world. I shall argue that the application of this theo-anthropological category can facilitate a better dialogue between CST and CSR and affirm the necessity to encourage corporate environmental responsibility.

IV. The theology of the 'Created Co-Creator'

The current ecological crisis makes a demand on us as moral persons. The role of the human person has to be rethought and redefined if we are to deal with the changing situations in the world (especially with regard to the environment) with justice, care, and efficiency. What kind of a role should the human person play within the natural world? Should the human person play the role of a servant, or of a steward or of a tyrant? The question as to the *'rightful place of the human person'* is a very pressing issue. The interesting part of the whole discussion is that these questions are on the one hand, asked by mankind and on the other, these are addressed to the mankind.¹² We ask how the situation can be improved, how the environmental degradation can be reduced and how we can contribute to the protection of the natural environment. On the other hand, as Hefner says, "in their mute and yet dramatic way, *our fellow citizens in the commonwealth of the natural world* – plants and animals – ask us the question."¹³ These questions need to be answered, because we cannot afford to wait any longer.

1. Development of the term 'Created Co-Creator'

The beginnings of the proposal for understanding the human person as created co-creator can be traced back to "*Unsere Verantwortlichkeit gegenüber der Schöpfung*", an article published by Frits Blanke in 1959. In this article he called for the acceptance and appreciation of 'co-createdness' which he called *'Mitgeschöpflichkeit'* and suggested that we all belong to the one family, no matter if we belong to the human race or not.¹⁴

Alles, was da lebt, ist vom selben Schöpfergeiste durchwaltet. Wir sind, ob Mensch oder Nichtmensch, Glieder einer großen Familie. Diese Mitgeschöpflichkeit (als Gegenstück zur Mitmenschlichkeit) verpflichtet. Sie auferlegt uns Verantwortung für die anderen "Familienglieder".¹⁵

In 1970, Karl Rahner used the same idea in his discussion about the problem of genetic manipulation in his article "*Zum Problem der genetischen manipulation aus der Sicht des Theologen*", although the explicit use of 'created co-creator' was not yet introduced as

¹² Philip Hefner, "Editorial. Human Being: Questioning and Being Questioned," *Zygon* 39, no. 4 (December 2004), 733.

¹³ Hefner, "Editorial. Human Being: Questioning and Being Questioned," 733. The emphasis is given by me to show that we need to see the natural world and our place within it as interconnected. We cannot separate ourselves from this 'commonwealth' of the natural world.

¹⁴ Fritz Blanke, "Unsere Verantwortlichkeit gegenüber der Schöpfung," in *Der Auftrag der Kirche in der modernen Welt. Festgabe zum siebzigsten Geburtstag von Emil Brunner* (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1959), 193-198.

¹⁵ Blanke, "Unsere Verantwortlichkeit gegenüber der Schöpfung," 198.

such.¹⁶ The term 'created co-creator' as is presently used in scholarly circles was introduced in 1984 by Philip Hefner. This was developed into a full-fledged theory through the publication of his book, "*The Human Factor. Evolution, Culture, and Religion*" in 1993. In this book he develops a theology of the 'created co-creator' and brings it in relation to divine purposes for all creation. The term has attracted wide attention not only from theologians, but also from philosophers, scientists, and people who have been on the lookout for finding a category that could do justice to the unique role of the human person, while taking into account the whole creation. From the time of its introduction it has exerted a lot of influence in theological anthropology. Just as with anything new, people have reacted very differently to this new term. Many accepted it with great satisfaction. Some rejected it since they looked at it from the point of view of 'playing God' and yet others have found it a vital concept that should be developed further.¹⁷ In my opinion, this concept is a significant one that can help us to make breakthroughs in our dealings with the natural world in this time of environmental crisis.

2. Theological Core of the Vision: Interpreting Human Beings

Philip Hefner has developed at length the core of this category in theological anthropology and its theological implications for human beings and the natural world. His efforts to come to an adequate theo-anthropological category can be considered to be an original contribution in understanding the place of man in creation. According to him:

Human beings are God's created co-creators whose purpose is to be the agency, acting in freedom, to birth the future that is most wholesome for the nature that has birthed us – the nature that is not only our own genetic heritage, but also the entire human community and the evolutionary and ecological reality in which and to which we belong. Exercising this agency is said to be God's will for humans.¹⁸

It is interesting to note that this concept is very original, useful and compact in several ways. First, it puts forward '*one unified image*' in theological anthropology through which we can summarise the whole lot of our understanding about the human person. Second, it makes room for the '*conditionedness of human existence*' and suggests that the human person can be seen as the crucial element in the evolution of the whole world. Third, we can see '*freedom as the qualifier*' of this conditionedness, through which God enables his creation and achieves his purposes.¹⁹ In my opinion, the theory opens up new horizons and offers us new possibilities in our thinking about the role of the human person within creation. We shall deal with these three dimensions and their theological and anthropological implications in the following section. Hefner points out the three elements of his theory as follows:

¹⁶ Karl Rahner, "Zum Problem der genetischen manipulation aus der Sicht des Theologen," in *Menschenzüchtung: das Problem der genetischen Manipulierung des Menschen*, ed. Friedrich Wagner (München: Beck, 1970), 135-166.

¹⁷ Roger A. Willer, "Created Co-Creator in the Perspective of Church and Ethics," *Zygon* 39, no. 4 (December 2004), 844-847.

¹⁸ Philip Hefner, *The Human Factor. Evolution, Culture and Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 27.

¹⁹ Hefner, *The Human Factor. Evolution, Culture and Religion*, 31-32.

1. The Human being is created by God to be a co-creator in the creation that God has brought into being and for which God has purposes.
2. The conditioning matrix that has produced the human being – the evolutionary process – is God's process of bringing into being a creature who represents the creation's zone of a new stage of freedom and who therefore is crucial for the emergence of a free creation.
3. The freedom that marks the created co-creator and its culture is an instrumentality of God for enabling the creation (consisting of the evolutionary past of genetic and cultural inheritance as well as the contemporary ecosystem) to participate in the intentional fulfilment of God's purposes.²⁰

2.1. The Human Person is 'created'

In the term 'created co-creator', both the noun and the adjective are important. The '*created*' in the 'created co-creator' calls for some explanation. The term 'created' refers to our own 'createdness' which affirms that ultimately we are also creatures, and as such, dependent. This dependency is to be referred to God and we are totally dependent on the creative grace of God for our very origin and existence.²¹ The terms '*the way things really are*' and '*what really is*' are to be used in reference to God. Since we are 'created', we belong to 'the way things really are' through our conditionedness and freedom. This also acknowledges the fact that as 'created' beings, we are not de designers of our own place and role in the world. As Hefner says, "to be created is to be derived, to be dependent upon antecedent factors (environmental, biological, cultural) as well as contemporary sources (environmental, cultural)."²² The term gains its theological significance when we make the reference to 'God'. The conditionedness that we experience is a conditionedness that has its origin in the divine creative activity. God should be seen here as the foundation, the corner stone of the process from which the human beings have emerged.²³

Homo Sapiens did not emerge to be conquistador, dominating and pillaging as the opportunity arose. Rather, as creature, the human serves the process of the creator, and all of the possibilities, activities, and achievements of the creature are to be referred to the created order and the purposes with which it has been endowed.²⁴

Two qualities that characterise this being 'created' are the aspects of *belonging and receptivity*. We must be conscious of the fact that for long, the human person has been thought of and understood in dualistic terms. More than ever, our times insist on the fact that "we can no longer tolerate understandings of human nature that insist upon separating us from our fellow human beings, from the natural ecosystem in which we live, or from the evolutionary processes in which we have emerged."²⁵ Our belonging to

²⁰ Hefner, *The Human Factor. Evolution, Culture and Religion*, 32.

²¹ Philip Hefner, "The Evolution of the Created Co-Creator," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 15, no. 6 (December 1988), 522.

²² Hefner, *The Human Factor. Evolution, Culture and Religion*, 35-36.

²³ Hefner, *The Human Factor. Evolution, Culture and Religion*, 36-38.

²⁴ Hefner, *The Human Factor. Evolution, Culture and Religion*, 36.

²⁵ Philip Hefner, "Biocultural Evolution of the Created Co-Creator," *Dialog* 36, no. 3 (Summer 1997), 198. See also Hefner, *The Human Factor. Evolution, Culture and Religion*, 37.

the world is a specific property of our existence. This brings us also in contact with the other human beings and surpasses the interpersonal realm and extends the sphere of concern and care to the nature and other living beings. I am of the opinion that a coherent vision on the human person should certainly take into account not only the relationship to God and to other human beings but also to the natural world and nonhuman beings.

2.2. The Human Person is 'co-creator'

By using 'created co-creator' as a new category in theological anthropology, we not only emphasise the 'created' dimension (with reference to God, other human beings and the natural world), but also the 'creative' one. The term 'co-creator' refers to the freedom of the human being, which is a foundational and fundamental condition of existence. Through this freedom, the human persons are capable of facing situations in which they have to make choices, which have an enormous influence in shaping their life. They are called to make these choices in freedom and furthermore, they also need to justify these choices. The specificity of the human person consists in the fact that it is only humans who are able to make the decisions, and are in charge of shaping their life and are called to justify their choices.²⁶ To put it in Hefner's own words:

Humans cannot avoid the freedom to make the choice, and only humans can construct the stories that justify such choices... environmental policies require a myriad of value judgments concerning the comparative values of the earth and of humans and other forms of life. Humans cannot avoid such policy-making and the value judgments inherent to that policy. Further, only humans can construct the stories that provide the justifying arguments for such judgments.²⁷

A similar idea is offered by Richard Fern in 'Nature, God and Humanity' where he speaks about the creation that God has made. The possibility to make choice is a gift that God has given His creation:

God grants creation its own, creative freedom for the sake of a love, a mutuality, that cannot exist apart from genuine freedom and risk. It is not enough to have created creatures with whom he can talk, creatures capable of grasping creation and analogically, himself in thought, God must give these creatures and, thereby, creation, the nature he has so lovingly made, the capacity to choose their own future, to form and act for reasons, ends, and goals, of their own... Having placed the future of creation in its own reflective awareness, God waits for the free reciprocity of his continuing, sustaining love.²⁸

²⁶ Willer, "Created Co-Creator in the Perspective of Church and Ethics," 841-858. Willer argues that Hefner's concept does not give sufficient attention to the aspect of responsibility. A one-sided emphasis on freedom is not adequate for this new category in theological anthropology. He suggests that through the use of Jonas' imperative responsibility, that it would become a better concept in defining the place of man in creation. See especially 849 and following. Westhelle is of the opinion that Hefner's concept "fails to give a realistic description of the human situations of being on the edge that points to an end where there are no alternatives or negotiations." See Vitor Westhelle, "The Poet, the Practitioner, and the Beholder: Remarks on Philip Hefner's "Created Co-Creator", " *Zygon* 39, no. 4 (December 2004), 747-754.

²⁷ Hefner, *The Human Factor. Evolution, Culture and Religion*, 38.

²⁸ Fern, *Nature, God and Humanity. Envisioning an Ethics of Nature*, 160.

The qualities of belonging and receptivity are morally qualified since the human persons are self-conscious and are therefore able to plan their life in the world. While carrying out their plans, they are conscious of their sense of belonging to the natural world of which they are part of and they are able to receive feedback and alter the process by making use of the accumulated wisdom. The freedom of the human person is a determined human condition.²⁹ Rational reflection and moral action are essential elements of this human condition. This is also the dimension that emphasises the possibilities for 'human becoming'. Without freedom, the human persons will not be able to play a creative and constructive role in the world to which they belong. They are designers of their own destiny, but always in reference to God and his purposes for the creation. As a creature, the human person is called to be a 'co-creator' with God, in fulfilling God's purposes for the creation.

2.2.1. Freedom as an essential component

Freedom as the defining condition of the human persons highlights the extraordinary characteristics of the human creature and the special place that this creature has within the ecosystem of the planet. But this freedom should *not be mistaken for equality with God*, the Creator. As we have described above the human persons are creatures and can therefore never be considered equal to God, since they are dependent on the Creator for their creative activity.³⁰ The 'co' in the co-creator has to be emphasised if we are to take the term in its right meaning. This suggests that we are participating in the creative action of God, not on our own, not in subordination, but in partnership. It also confirms that the future is open and undetermined. The human person can give it direction whenever needed, or change the course whenever found necessary.³¹ Hefner explains this as follows:

It is because we are grounded in a prior relationship with God who is bearing us along according to his will for the destiny of the cosmos that we find our creative characteristics significant. We are participants in a much larger ongoing creative process. Without such grounding, these characteristic abilities would mean little.³²

As is explained above, the creative activity of the human person finds its source in God the Creator who gives it to mankind with love. That they get a special place to be 'co-creators' to participate actively in the unique plan of God, is a special and essential characteristic of the human persons as 'created co-creators'.

²⁹ Hefner, *The Human Factor. Evolution, Culture and Religion*, 97-98; Alan Nordstrom, "Making is Finding," *Zygon* 39, no. 4 (December 2004), 745. Nordstrom writes in his poem the following:

"Man makes himself," most modern thinkers say:

By freely chosen acts we shape our lives,

Becoming what we see and do, like clay

Taking expression from our conscious knives."

³⁰ Hefner, *The Human Factor. Evolution, Culture and Religion*, 39.

³¹ Gregory R. Peterson, "The Created Co-Creator: What it is and is not," *Zygon* 39, no. 4 (December 2004), 829.

³² Hefner, "The Evolution of the Created Co-Creator," 524.

2.2.2. Joining the purposes of creation

To have a proper understanding of the 'created co-creator' we have to place it in the context of creation and its purposes. Without this essential dimension, the 'created co-creator' loses its meaning. The purposes of God for the creation connect the human persons to the destiny willed by God. "Both the creation and the human being have purposes for their existence, and the two are intertwined within the larger notion of God's destiny for the entire creation."³³ The purpose of creation rests on the fact that we need to consider nature as a primary source of knowledge about the human life and its *raison d'être*. From a theological point of view, nature is to be understood and valued as God's creation. This is also the view upheld by the Judeo-Christian tradition. Nature is actually all that we have in our efforts to understand the world. Hefner is of the opinion that even those religions that speak of revelation, have to recognise "that revelation happens within nature, and that it is received, understood, and interpreted through the thoroughly natural structures of a natural animal, *Homo Sapiens*."³⁴

As human persons we are embedded in this world, out of which we ourselves have evolved. The world (nature) becomes the stage for all our operations. The natural web of interrelationships, within which we find our place, suggests that the purpose of human existence should be referred to this web of interrelationships. The human construction of purposes has a great influence in the natural world especially if we place it in the circle of relationships. The concept of 'wholesomeness' can help us to find an appropriate manner in which humans can contribute to the purposes in creation. In our understanding of the human person, nature receives great significance.

... nature is the arena for human purpose and that concern for nature's wholesome state provides a pragmatic criterion for our thinking... Nature is the medium through which the world, including human beings, receives knowledge, as well as grace.³⁵

The idea of 'wholesomeness' should be scrutinised thoroughly in order to come to a consensus regarding what is good for nature. Our behaviours have different effects and outcomes and therefore, they do not bring the same result for the human beings and the whole of nature. This is true especially with regard to the application of technological innovations and possibilities. We have to make choices in this technological civilisation within which we live. This particular aspect demands of us that we take decisions that are scientifically and technologically responsible and theologically coherent. If we take the evolution of man into account, we can understand the meaning of nature as follows: "... the appearance of *homo sapiens* as created co-creator signifies that nature's course is to participate in transcendence and freedom".³⁶ Human beings are called to discern the requirements for adequate living and they need to learn to meet the challenges that are open to them. The '*environmental collapse*' that we face today can be seen as a result of our incapacity to cope up with the technological era. It is not enough that we make

³³ Manuel G. Doncel, "The Kenosis of the Creator and of the Created Co-Creator," *Zygon* 39, no. 4 (December 2004), 794; Hefner, *The Human Factor. Evolution, Culture and Religion*, 39.

³⁴ Hefner, *The Human Factor. Evolution, Culture and Religion*, 41.

³⁵ Hefner, *The Human Factor. Evolution, Culture and Religion*, 42.

³⁶ Hefner, "Biocultural Evolution of the Created Co-Creator," 197.

choices and transform them into actions. We need to be morally responsible and give justification for our actions.

2.3. The 'created co-creator' and 'Nature as a Project'

As humans we are continually involved in the search for understanding the purpose and meaning of our existence. In this search, the ecosystem plays a vital role. To exercise the role of the 'created co-creator', we need to take into account the particularity of the nature within which we live. Wirzba is of the opinion that:

“... an ecological ethic compels us to think and act beyond the parameters of individual lives and moral subjects... And so we need to think in ethical ways that encompass environments and environmental processes without turning them into moral subjects or agents... From an ecological point of view, we should say that we ourselves and our activities are caught up in and maintained by continuing natural processes that are fundamental and prior to the work of our valuation... Properly speaking, life is the medium, if not the voice, of value. We value poorly or falsely when we forget, as in instrumental approaches to valuation, this ecological context.”³⁷

The 'created co-creator' functions as the interpreter of the meanings of nature. According to Hefner there are several reasons why the 'created co-creator' can interpret nature and several ways in which this can be done. First, “the created co-creator is a natural entity, and its placement is fully within nature”. A reflection on the created co-creator and its characteristics can bring us to the knowledge of nature. Second, the context within which the created co-creator operates is the context of nature. The purposes and goals for the activity of humans are to be referred to the rest of nature. The human purposes and aims are to be placed within nature. The aims of the human activity and the contributions made by the human beings are to be in the service of nature. Third, “the fact that the created co-creator has appeared is a statement about what nature has come to, what nature is capable of, and what nature itself has produced or allowed to appear.” It is here that we come across the question if the qualities of awareness, intentionality, agency and personhood can be attributed to nature and to its processes as well. Hefner is of the opinion that due to the close connection between humans and nature, whatever is attributed to the human being may also be attributed to nature, even though only potentially.³⁸ Fourth, “if transcendence and freedom are characteristics of human being, they are ipso facto characteristics of nature”. The transcendence in the human being is encountered by nature and the freedom experienced by the human being is also experienced by nature. Fifth, “the appearance of the created co-creator inclines us to speak of nature as “project,” and to ask what the appearance of this creature suggests concerning “nature’s project.”³⁹

3. *Rediscovering possibilities to care for nature*

The Christian faith reiterates the fact that God is the ultimate source of everything. The belief in God as 'Creator' is the most fundamental statement of our Christian faith, and it

³⁷ Wirzba, *The Paradise of God. Renewing Religion in an Ecological Age*, 106-107.

³⁸ Hefner, "Biocultural Evolution of the Created Co-Creator," 202.

³⁹ Hefner, "Biocultural Evolution of the Created Co-Creator," 202.

is the foundation on which our life as Christians revolves around. The emergence of the 'created co-creator' opens up new horizons in theology, in our thinking about God as the Creator, the place of the human person as 'created co-creator' within it and the value of nature as creation. The 'created co-creator' is the plan of God for the world and it is through the human person as created co-creator that God wants to bring his purposes for the world to fulfilment. Keeping this in mind, I would like to reflect on the possibilities that the created co-creator can offer us in dealing with the environment.

First, the created co-creator emphasises the fact that the human person is *first and foremost a creature*, together with the natural world. Mankind is not to be seen as an autonomous entity, but has to be seen in relationship with a God who creates in love. In this way, we are dependent on the Ultimate Reality. This dimension of '*createdness*' and '*dependence*' qualifies our existence in the world. The correlation between the nature of the world and the nature of the Creator manifests itself fully in the human being. It is this 'createdness' that connects the human person to God and to the natural world.⁴⁰ *Second*, the 'created co-creator' opens up new avenues for taking care of nature. As we have already stated, creation is fully grounded in God who has freely desired and brought everything into being. The fact that we are 'co-creators' with God is not a license to act according to our whims and fancies. It is furthermore, no reason for us to be arrogant as 'co-creators' because we need to acknowledge that this gift comes from God and that it is a state of 'givenness'. It should be seen as '*God's will for the human persons to be co-creators*'. Nature, together with the human beings, as creation should be seen as the realm of intentionality, which is to be perceived within the realm of God's intentionality. As Hefner says, "this theological framework illuminates the fact that human intentionality exists not for its own sake, not only for the sake of the human species, but as the expression of and for the sake of the larger intentionality of God's creation, nature".⁴¹

Third, the concept '*creatio continua*' acquires its fullest meaning in the human person as 'created co-creator'. Creation has to be understood, not only as that which is present here and now, but it also refers to the manner in which God sustains His creation continually. The world depends continuously on the ongoing grace of God. From the point of view that God continues to care for the natural world, we can accept that *the nonhuman creation is valuable* and that it is an entity that the humans can trust. They are not to view the natural world as antagonistic to their life and progress, but as complementary, supportive and strengthening to their own well-being. The earth has to be seen as a friendly home for mankind.⁴² The earth is not an enemy whom we have to fight, but a friend who needs our care and concern. There is also a *correlation between God, humans and the natural world* because these three are partakers in the creative activity. We have to see ourselves as participating actively in the ongoing work of God. As 'created co-creators' we are called to make choices and to act in such a way that we can direct the

⁴⁰ Hefner, "The Evolution of the Created Co-Creator," 522; Hefner, "Biocultural Evolution of the Created Co-Creator," 203; Peterson, "The Created Co-Creator: What it is and is not," 828-829.

⁴¹ Hefner, "Biocultural Evolution of the Created Co-Creator," 203.

⁴² Hefner, "The Evolution of the Created Co-Creator," 523; George V. Lobo, *Guide to Christian Living. A New Compendium on Moral Theology* (Westminster: Christian Classics, 1991), 79-80.

course of events.⁴³ Humans have to keep in mind that our creative activity and the way we are able to develop and bring things into being, is a 'dependent' creation, which is in no way a restriction, but a possibility to contribute constructively our share in the continuation of creation. The use of the latest modes of science and technology are encouraged here, only if they are in consonance with the freedom that God has given and the responsibility this demands of us.⁴⁴

Fourth, through the creation of the 'created co-creator', God lays bare his plan for the further evolution and future of the world. Our example in this undertaking is Jesus Christ, the New Adam, who can also be called as the 'prototype of the true *humanum*'. It is in and through Jesus, our model that God reveals to us the possibilities and potentialities of humans and what humanity can yet become. The Christ event can be taken as the event to which we are called to adapt ourselves. "In his life, death, and teachings, Jesus offers us the possibilities for raising human living to a higher plane, one which will reveal new ways of adapting to the reality system of nature and of God".⁴⁵ The love-principle that Jesus proposed can be seen as a guideline to go beyond the boundaries of our interpersonal relationships and to extend our love also to the natural world. Going beyond the boundaries of kinship is a basic Christian attitude that can be of enormous help in caring for nature and in building up the natural environment.⁴⁶ By taking Jesus as our model, we can bring about changes in our attitudes towards nature and inculcate qualities that can strengthen our relationship with God, other human beings and nature.

From a theological perspective, we can summarise the new theo-anthropological concept of the 'created co-creator' as follows:

Homo sapiens is God's created co-creator, whose purpose is the "stretching/enabling" of the systems of nature so that they can participate in God's purposes in the mode of freedom, for which the paradigm is Jesus Christ, both in respect to his life and to his understanding of the world as God's creation.⁴⁷

⁴³ Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 168-172; Hefner, "The Evolution of the Created Co-Creator," 523. Grenz speaks of our creative activity and says that humans are always on the lookout for finding new possibilities and to further the creation. On page 171 he says: "... humans are never completely satisfied with the present. We are always seeking the new, the "future," the not-yet, that which surpasses the present. We are continually shaping and reshaping our environment in an unfulfilled attempt to create a "home" for ourselves."

⁴⁴ Willem B. Drees, "'Playing God? Yes!'" Religion in the Light of Technology," *Zygon* 37, no. 3 (September 2002), 643-654. Drees speaks about the use of technology and science and says that when they fail, humans naturally fall back to God. By doing this, they create a 'God of the gaps'. In my opinion, the created co-creator should not be searching for a God of the gaps, but should be attentive to the directions of the God of life. It is through this that the human person can realise his/her role as created co-creator. See also Philip Hefner, "Technology and Human Becoming," *Zygon* 37, no. 3 (September 2002), 655-665.

⁴⁵ Hefner, "The Evolution of the Created Co-Creator," 524; Jerome A. Stone, "Philip Hefner and the Modernist / Postmodernist Divide," *Zygon* 39, no. 4 (December 2004), 761-762.

⁴⁶ Hefner, "The Evolution of the Created Co-Creator," 524; Hefner, "Biocultural Evolution of the Created Co-Creator," 203; William Irons, "An Evolutionary Critique of the Created Co-Creator Concept," *Zygon* 39, no. 4 (December 2004), 777-778.

⁴⁷ Hefner, "Biocultural Evolution of the Created Co-Creator," 203-204.

V. Conclusion: Promoting corporate environmental responsibility

In my opinion this concept can contribute in a significant manner in our discussion about the good company and its efforts to promote environmental protection. *First* of all, I think that CST and CSR can profit considerably, since created co-creator can be interpreted not only theologically but also within the secular circles such as in the functioning of business firms. It can certainly promote the dialogue between CST and CSR, by providing a unified image of the human person, one that is acceptable and beneficial to both areas. *Second*, by emphasising on the 'creative dimension', the created co-creator heightens (1) the dignity of the human person, and the unique value of work, which are central to CST, based on the Holy Bible (Gen.1:26-28) and stressed in many official documents of the Church,⁴⁸ and (2) the role of personal creativity and engagement⁴⁹ which results in objective and subjective outputs. *Third*, if we interpret business as a community of persons working for the common good,⁵⁰ then the created co-creator can function as the catalyst that drives the movement by ensuring that this process becomes an ethically qualified undertaking. *Fourth*, by discovering the purposes that God has for the creation, the CCC works as a good and active steward by recognising and respecting the goodness of creation. *Fifth*, in the choices of principles and implementation of policies within the business enterprises, the created co-creator ensures that profit-making does not overrule human dignity and the integrity of the natural environment, but that these choices will lead to environmental protection and sustainability. *Sixth*, by engaging responsibly and acting in freedom, the created co-creator inspires us to go beyond limited utilitarianism and selfishness. Created co-creator encourages the values of temperance, fairness, and equity and guarantees that the material goods are not misused. This is achieved through the implementation of environmental regulations through ethically coherent, credible and fair practices in order to create a more just society. In this way the created co-creator transforms a business firm into an ethically sound enterprise that contributes to the common good and accomplishes environmental protection and sustainable development.

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⁴⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994), articles 357, 369 and 1700; *Rerum Novarum* (1891), 62; *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), 119; *Pacem in Terris* (1963), 35; *Evangelium Vitae* (1995), 42; *Pontifical Council For Justice And Peace. Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004), 262.

⁴⁹ *Gaudium et spes* (1965), 21, 35, 53; *Populorum Progressio* (1967), 27; *Laborem Exercens* (1981), 4; *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987), 29, 34.

⁵⁰ Alford, Sena, and Shcherbinina, "Philosophical Underpinnings and Basic Concepts for a Dialogue between CST and CSR on the "Good Company" Working Draft."